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**GUV ENDS STATE LAND PRESERVATION  
Environmentalists Ask Legislature to Restore Funding**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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New York Governor David Paterson stunned environmentalists by slashing \$79 million from the state's Environmental Protection Fund and eliminating land preservation altogether. The news came in the form of his proposed budget for 2010, released in January.

The state's cuts come as Suffolk and Nassau County's land programs have fallen to new lows. This, although a recent poll shows that eight of ten Long Islanders support maintaining or even expanding land preservation despite the recession. Poll respondents say the decline in land prices makes this a good time to buy.

The Environmental Protection Fund was created in 1993 in connection with passage of the Pine Barrens Protection Act. The EPF was intended, in part, to pay landowners fair market value for land needed to protect the Island's purest drinking water supply and to preserve the greatest diversity of plants and animals anywhere in New York State. Observers warned that failure to restore preservation funding could compromise Pine Barrens protection permanently.

The Pine Barrens Act prohibits development in 55,000 acres (Core Preservation Area) and allows controlled development on 47,000 additional acres (Compatible Growth Area). The primary purpose is to allow the nation's first Sole Source Aquifer to be recharged by rainfall without introducing contamination resulting from human activity on the surface.

The Environmental Protection Fund was created to compensate owners of Pine Barrens land (and land to be preserved elsewhere in the state) which cannot be developed. Failure to do so may result in the unconstitutional taking of private property without just compensation.

For an example, one landowner negotiated to sell to the state nearly 100 acres of land he owns in the Core Preservation Area of the Pine Barrens, adjacent to Cathedral Pines County Park. He has never been paid. Now, he finds that the fund that would be used to compensate him for his land is being eliminated. He is obviously concerned.

Long Islanders are concerned not merely that environmental funding is being reduced, but that the Pine Barrens Act itself will be undermined and drinking water protection lost after an investment of \$500 million to purchase lands needed for groundwater protection.

Pine Barrens Society President Alan Singer said, "Maintaining funding for land conservation has been a full-time job for several years, but Governor Paterson's proposal would be devastating and would threaten decades of Pine Barrens preservation, if not overturned by the Legislature."

Environmentalists are asking the State Legislature to restore the needed funding that will impact Long Island as in no other place in the state.